

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. A method of capturing link-tracking information from a network user, the method comprising the steps of:

 providing a link-tracking server computer and a user computer such that a network user viewing a current display page sends a request to the link-tracking server, wherein the request includes a request to record link-tracking information in a link-tracking file where said
10 request received is originally contained in a tracking-enabled Web page; and
 creating a record in a link-tracking file containing link-tracking information.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
 determining a domain name of a file name specified in the network user request;
15 determining if the domain name of the requested file is different from the current display page domain name;
 indicating an exit link in the link-tracking file.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein determining if the domain name is different
20 comprises parsing the file name to identify a file name extension, a domain name, and a country code, if present in the file name.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein the network user employs a browser to view the page, the display page is sent from a server having a given domain and the further including the step of causing the browser to provide one or more cookies that originate from that domain.

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5. The method of claim 1, wherein the network user employs a browser to view a display page and the display page is tracking-enabled by a server that is a content provider server computer or a third party server computer, that responds to the user with a page having link-tracking code and further including the step of sending one or more corresponding requests to the link-tracking server to automatically record link-tracking information for each link selected by the user.

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6. The method of claim 5, wherein the user is connected to the content provider, link-tracking server or third party server via a data network.

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7. The method of claim 6, wherein the data network is the Internet, a private virtual network or a local area network.

8. The method of claim 6, wherein the user is connected to the content provider server via a data network that is a value added network.

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9. The method of claim 5 wherein the link-tracking server executes Web server software that includes an application server and a data store.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the data store also contains the link-tracking
5 files storing the link-tracking information.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the data store also contains one or more other data files other than the file storing the link-tracking information.

10 12. The method of claim 11, wherein the other programs comprise scripts or programs containing instructions to record the link-tracking information to the link-tracking files, or to generate link-tracking statistics or reports requested by a link-tracking subscriber.

15 13. The method of claim 5, wherein the link-tracking code is sent using the HTTP specification.

14. The method of claim 5, wherein the requests are real time protocol or file transfer protocol requests.

15. The method of claim 5 wherein link-tracking information is captured by using the JavaScript programming language to treat links as objects or link controls having properties sufficient to retrieve or read the properties link-tracking information such as the users URL address.

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16. The method of claim 15 wherein the Javascript code specifies a function initial and carries out the processing by searching for a links having anchor tags identified with start and end tags.

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17. The method of claim 5 wherein the link-tracking code is written such that whenever the link-tracking server is inoperative or inaccessible, the request for the page as selected by the user via a link may still be received at the content provider server or third party server.

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18. The method of claim 5 wherein cookies are sent by the server to create new cookies or update existing cookies contained in the user's computer.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein the server checks to see whether the user computer already has existing cookies.

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20. A method of capturing link-tracking information from a network user, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a link-tracking server computer that receives a request from the computer of a network user viewing a current display page, wherein the request includes a request to
5 record link-tracking information in a link-tracking file where said request received is originally contained in a tracking-enabled Web page; and

creating a record in a link-tracking file containing link-tracking information,

wherein the network user employs a browser to view a display page and the display page is tracking-enabled by a server that is a content provider server computer or a third party
10 server computer, said content provider server or a third party server responds to the user with a page having an image source file, and,

sending one or more corresponding requests to the link-tracking server to automatically record link-tracking information for each link selected by the user.

15 21. The method of claim 20 wherein the image source file contains image data and runs a script or program when such file is requested.

22. The method of claim 20 wherein the image source file does not contain image data but does contain and runs a script or program when such file is requested.

20 23. The method of claim 20, wherein the user is connected to the content provider server via a data network.

24. The method of claim 20, wherein the user is connected to the content provider server via a data network that is the Internet, a private virtual network or a local area network.

5 25. The method of claim 21, wherein the user is connected to the content provider server via a data network that is a value added network.

10 26. The method of claim 20 wherein the link-tracking server executes Web server software that includes an application server and a data store.

27. The method of claim 26 wherein the data store also contains the link-tracking files storing the link-tracking information.

15 28. The method of claim 27 wherein the data store also contains one or more other data files other than the file storing the link-tracking information.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the other programs comprise scripts or programs containing instructions to record the link-tracking information to the link-tracking files, or to generate link-tracking statistics or reports requested by a link-tracking subscriber.

20 30. The method of claim 20, wherein the link-tracking code is sent using the HTTP specification.

31. The method of claim 20, wherein the requests are in real time protocol or are file transfer protocol requests.

5 32. The method of claim 20 wherein link-tracking information is captured by using the JavaScript programming language to treat links as objects or link controls having properties sufficient to retrieve or read the properties link-tracking information such as the users URL address.

10 33. The method of claim 33 wherein the Javascript code specifies a function initial and carries out the processing by searching for links having anchor tags identified with start and end tags.

15 34. The method of claim 20 wherein the link-tracking code is also written such that whenever the link-tracking server is inoperative or inaccessible, the request for the page as selected by the user may still be received by the content provider server or third party server.

35. The method of claim 20 wherein cookies are sent by the link-tracking server to create new cookies or update existing cookies contained in the user's computer.

36. A computer server system for responding to requests for network data files comprising web site pages, the server system comprising:

a plurality of computers, each having a central processing unit that can establish communication with the network and having program memory that stores programming instructions that are executed by the central processing unit such that each computer of the
5 server system establishes communication with the network,

a link-tracking server computer and a user computer configured such that a network user viewing a current display page sends a request to the link-tracking server, wherein the request includes a request to record link-tracking information in a link-tracking file where said
10 request received is originally contained in a tracking-enabled Web page; and

a link-tracking file containing link-tracking information is created on the link tracking server.

37. The computer server system of claim 36 wherein the network user employs a
15 browser to view a display page and the display page is tracking-enabled by a server that is a content provider server computer or a third party server computer, that responds to the user with a page having link-tracking code or an image source file and further including the step of sending one or more corresponding requests to the link-tracking server to automatically record link-tracking information for each link selected by the user.

38. A program product for use in a computer system that executes program steps recorded in a computer-readable media to perform a method for processing a computer file request to retrieve a network data file comprising a web site page, the program product comprising:

5 a recordable media; and

a program of computer-readable instructions executable by the computer system to perform a method comprising the steps of:

providing a link-tracking server computer and a user computer such that a network user viewing a current display page sends a request to the link-tracking server, wherein the
10 request includes a request to record link-tracking information in a link-tracking file where said request received is originally contained in a tracking-enabled Web page; and
creating a record in a link-tracking file containing link-tracking information.

39. The program product of claim 38 wherein the network user employs a browser
15 to view a display page and the display page is tracking-enabled by a server that is a content provider server computer or a third party server computer, that responds to the user with a page having link-tracking code or an image source file and further including the step of sending one or more corresponding requests to the link-tracking server to automatically record link-tracking information for each link selected by the user.

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